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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 005115

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [OSCE](#) [PKK](#)

SUBJECT: [PKK FUNERAL CLASH](#) INDICATES RISING TENSION IN SOUTHEAST

REF: A. ANKARA 4842

[1](#)B. ANKARA 5109

Classified by Polcouns Janice G. Weiner; reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: One demonstrator was found dead following an August 28 clash in Batman between police and a group of PKK sympathizers trying to claim the bodies of six PKK fighters killed by Turkish military forces. Relatives of the victim say he was shot to death by police; the Batman police chief denies the charge. There have been similar violent incidents in recent months during funerals for PKK militants, one of many signs of rising tension in Turkey's southeast. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The conflict began August 28 when approximately 1,000 demonstrators gathered outside a hospital in Batman and attempted to claim the bodies of six PKK militants killed during an August 25-27 operation by Turkish military forces near the town of Besiri, Batman Province. Officers of the Turkish National Police reportedly used water cannons and tear gas against the protesters, who retaliated by hurling Molotov cocktails and stones at the officers. Police fired warning shots in the air, and there were allegations that some demonstrators had also used firearms. According to press reports, the demonstrators were affiliated with the pro-Kurdish Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) and an organization called Free Citizen Initiative. (Note: We are not familiar with this group. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (U) After the clash, 25-year-old Hasan Is was found dead at the scene. Relatives claimed police shot and killed Is during the altercation. However, Batman Police Chief Arif Oksuz issued a statement claiming that Is was killed before police opened fire, and that his body was placed at the scene by demonstrators. An attorney for the Is family told reporters that the autopsy had been manipulated to establish a false time of death in order to exonerate police. The body was later taken to the Diyarbakir Forensic Medicine Institute at the family's request. Blood, urine, and tissue samples will be sent to Istanbul for testing.

[1](#)4. (C) Sabih Atac, a Batman attorney and businessman, told us he blames both sides for provoking the clash -- the police, who showed up at the demonstration with a military-style armored vehicle, and the demonstrators, who arrived with ready-made Molotov cocktails. Atac is highly skeptical of Oksuz' claim that police did not shoot Is. He noted that the Batman governor has promised an investigation of the incident.

[1](#)5. (U) Members of Free Citizen Initiative on August 29 reportedly carried Is's coffin, draped in the green, red, and yellow colors of the PKK, while flashing photos of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and chanting pro-PKK slogans. Mourners reportedly smashed the windows of the Batman branch office of the ruling AK Party. Batman Mayor Huseyin Kalkan, a DEHAP member, attended the funeral, as did other mayors from the region. Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir, also of DEHAP, traveled to Batman to offer condolences to Is's family.

[1](#)6. (U) In recent months there have been several similar incidents of clashes between demonstrators and security forces during funeral services for PKK fighters. In June, one demonstrator was killed and 19 injured in two separate incidents in Van and Diyarbakir.

Comment: Rising Tensions in SE

[1](#)7. (C) The funeral clashes are one of many signs of rising PKK-related tensions in the southeast. As long as these tensions persist, it will be difficult for PM Erdogan to follow through on his inchoate initiative to address the Kurdish issue (reftels). It will also be difficult to escape from the shadow the PKK issue casts over U.S.-Turkey relations.
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